Trio of NM startups working with national labs to advance next-generation technologies

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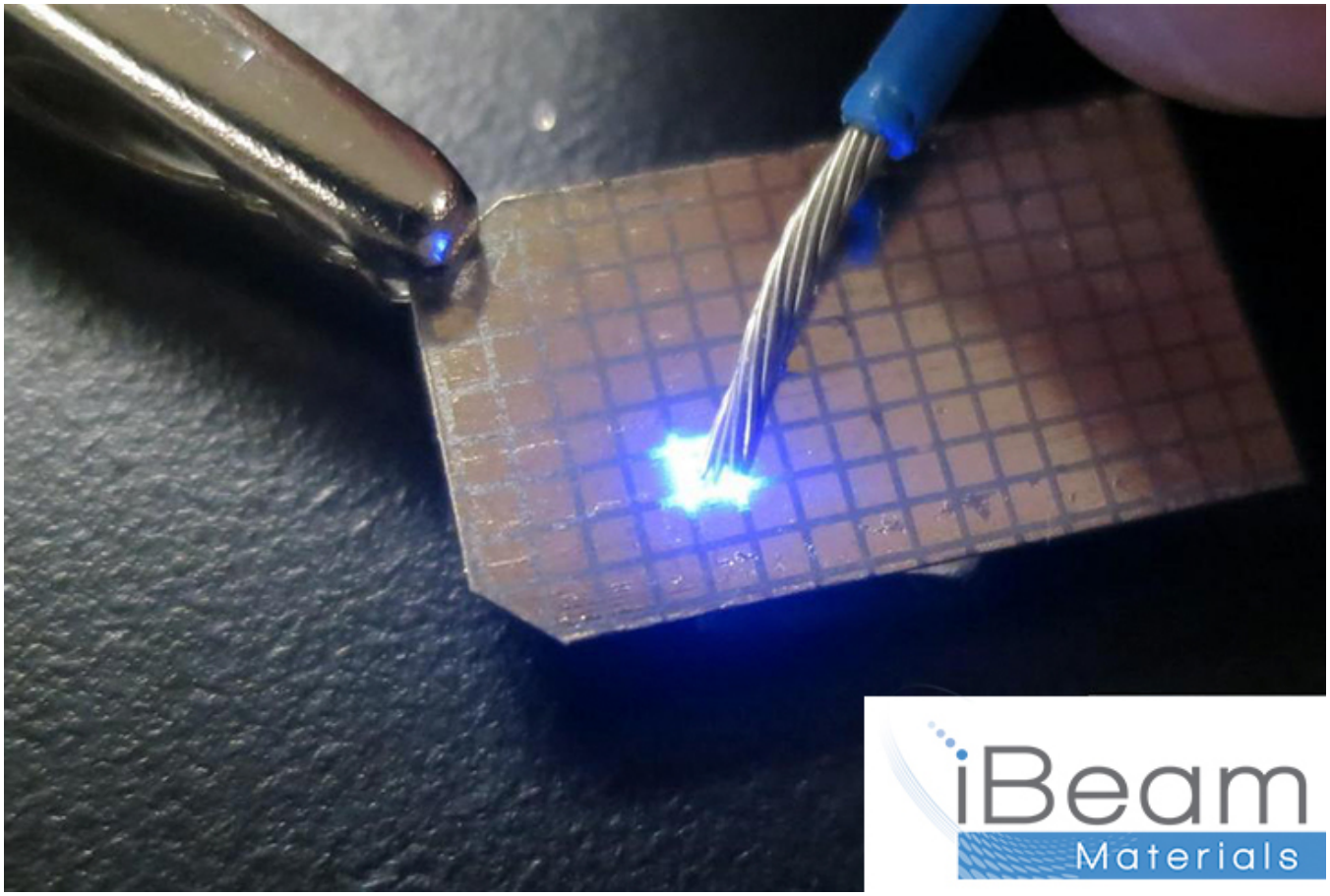

Three New Mexico startups are working hand-in-hand with various national labs to create a cleaner future.

Pajarito Powder, iBeam Materials and UbiQD are each participating in the Department of Energy's Small Business Vouchers pilot program, which provides funds and major partners for each company. So far 114 businesses have been inducted into the program since its creation in 2015. The program's purpose is to speed up the commercialization of next-generation technologies, gaining a leg up on global competition.

Sandia National Laboratories announced this week the selection of five more companies to participate in the pilot program. None of them are based in New Mexico.

PAJARITO POWDER

Albuquerque-based Pajarito Powder manufactures materials allowing fuel cell electric vehicles to work better, last longer and be cheaper, CEO and Chairman Tom Stephenson previously told Albuquerque Business First. The startup, founded in 2012, has been working with Los Alamos National Laboratory since last August to help commercialize such technologies developed by the Lab and by Pajarito.

"LANL has unique expertise in these catalyst systems, and the Department of Energy's Small Business Voucher program provides us critical access to LANL resources that allow us to bring additional cutting edge fuel cell technology to market," said Webb Johnson, senior director of business development.

The company recently returned from participating in a clean energy expo in Monaco. Stephenson said the Pajarito team discovered, "an interesting shift in the underlying motivations" for their product. He also expects a leap in fuel cell electric vehicle development within the next five years, adding that will be Pajarito Powder's time to shine.

iBEAM

iBeam Materials, a Santa Fe-based company, spun out from Los Alamos National Lab in 2011. The startup develops thin film technology that enables light-emitting materials on large flexible foils. The program awarded iBeam a $225,000 voucher in March 2016.

Now it is partnered with Sandia National Laboratories to improve the lighting, display and wearable electronics industries. In a statement, the company said the labs are key players in helping it accelerate its light-emitting process technology development.

Vladimir Matias, founder and president of iBeam Materials, said this partnership signals the beginning of its technology's potential.

“We are very grateful and honored to receive the new SBV funding as well as the support of our Sandia colleagues," he said. "iBeam is at the forefront of a breakthrough light emitting technology."

In 2013 the startup also received a $793,000 award from the Department of Energy to develop next-generation manufacturing technologies for high-power electronics.

UbiQD

UbiQD is the third New Mexico startup participating in the DOE's Small Business Vouchers program, receiving a $300,000 voucher in the process. The startup works on developing quantum dots, which lately has led it to develop technology that turns windows into solar panels.

The Los Alamos company was paired up with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory in August. Since then, the Lab has helped UbiQD figure out the costs of their window-related tech, which helps the company estimate its potential return on investments.

Founder and president Hunter McDaniel expressed gratitude for the relationship, which he called, "very productive."

"Our relationship with NREL lends credibility to UbiQD in the marketplace because they are the top renewable energy research institution in the world," McDaniel said. "The modeling has

been useful in our engagement with investors, who want confidence that the economics work out."

The startup has also worked with Sandia Labs through its New Mexico Small Business Assistance program, which connects small businesses with scientists and engineers from the local national labs who give them expert help. UbiQD previously received a $225,000 grant from the National Science Foundation.

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